

Since moving to the San Joaquin Valley seven years ago, I frequently heard the name Pappas in conversations among locals and, of course, in the media. I am not surprised to learn that the Pappas Telecasting Companies have given free airtime to Republican candidates running in our Fresno/Visalia elections. Pappas has lived up to his/their reputation of flexing muscle when it serves their political interests.

The Valley is not served when corporate headquarters decides to make one side louder in local elections, especially since the Valley is so heavily Republican anyway. Often there is simply no opposition whatsoever to Republican candidates. Nevertheless, when there is disagreement, local audiences should be offered genuine debate. The opposition should not have to purchase air time, not when the Republicans don't.

Pappas uses the public airwaves free of charge and, as a quid pro quo, is obligated by law to serve the public interest. Pappas' actions are legally questionable and cast doubt on whether Pappas truly intends to serve the public interest. Their actions show why we need to strengthen media ownership rules, not weaken them. Further, they show why the license renewal process needs to involve more than just a returned postcard. Thank you.